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FAMILY AGAIN

And now I must tell of the last and most momentous of my travels as a boy, a journey through half of India that started with a joyous family reunion in Assam during my Christmas holidays of 1936, and ended with my happy return to Bangalore, followed shortly by my mother to a home (but still not a house) of her own. I have already told how we broke up home after all but one of the children had flown the nest, and only my mother and I were left. Followed two years during which she moved from place to place, first to stay with my father's brother Tom in Rangoon, where she was home-sick and unhappy, and later and more happily with Doreen, then a government doctor in Barabanki near Lucknow, and finally with Ralph in Kalimpong. There she met her very first daughter-in-law, Ralph's wife May and their baby daughter Patricia, whose company helped to lift her out of her low spirits.

Meanwhile, I had gone in again as a boarder to St Joseph's in mid-1935 for the last year and a half of my schooling, undoubtedly the happiest period of that part of my life up to then. Preparing for boarding life again was not too difficult. The household towels, bed-sheets and pillow-cases that were still fit for use proved enough for my needs. I had to supplement my slacks and shirts with a couple of sets of new ones, and since I was now tall enough to wear my brothers' things unaltered, I took over from Cyril the hand-me-downs mentioned earlier, and a tussore-silk suit which Pat felt he could spare. Some ties, socks and shoes completed my wardrobe. These, together with my books, went into an old steel trunk that had been my father's throughout his working life, and which I was to use throughout my own.

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Thus equipped, I entered not just the most joyous phase of my school career but by far the most fulfilling. There was time spent at the cricket nets developing my bowling arm and making the First XI; long practice in track and field which got me my Victor Ludorum from five firsts - the high, long and triple jumps, a throw (of the cricket ball) and the 220 yards sprint, for we had yet to convert to meters; regular choir practice for the last High Mass that I would sing in the school chapel (I was a passable bass by then); and frequent stage rehearsals for the plays in which not a year went by without my taking part. Most important of all was my final swot for my Senior Cambridge and High School examinations - English, French, maths (four papers: arithmetic, algebra, geometry and trigonometry) and my *bete noir*, physics, on which my first-class in the High School depended. All this took place when some of the loveliest music and most wholesome cinema was being produced, and with the company of good and decent friends to share the pleasure. My only regret was taking my first puff at a cigarette at about this time.

In the meantime, ahead of the last hard haul in class lay the happy thought that when I was finally done with school, I would be seeing my mother again, along with Pat and Cyril, at a family reunion in Assam. Pat was then on special keddah duty, his main camp situated some three miles up-river from Dimapur, which in those days was hardly more than a bazaar. It was important only as the railhead for the road to Kohima and Manipur, tribal territories little heard of until some six years later, when they became the scenes of two of the most bitter, crucial and finally successful battles against the Japanese.

My ticket to Calcutta was something the family could not easily afford, but here I struck good fortune. Akaury, a classmate of mine, was the son of a railway officer stationed there. He had rail passes for himself (first class) and two servants (third), but as he had made do with just one family cook-bearer during his time as a day-scholar, he generously offered to let me travel as his second! Even if (shades of Abu Road!) I did have to tax a slightly elastic conscience once again, I had no false pride, and would have traveled third class

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anyway, so I gratefully agreed to his suggestion that I pose as his second servant for the journey to Calcutta. School over, he picked me up for the early morning Express to Madras, but cut it so fine that I had no time to book my trunk into the luggage-van, it being too big to go into my third class compartment. I could easily have shoved it into Akaury's, but the Station Master assured us he would send it on by the next train in time to reach me before I caught the onward Mail for Calcutta that night. This, of course, did not eventuate, and the trunk went missing, causing me to spend my first two months in Assam wearing my brothers' clothes. They were both sturdy in build, while I was lank and skinny, but as we spent most of our time in the jungles, nobody noticed my sartorial deficiencies. Also, it lent some purpose to our regular evening walk from our camp to the railway station to enquire if my trunk had arrived. It finally did, but only after much time and correspondence with the railways.

My mother and Cyril arrived the same day as I at Calcutta's Howrah station from where we made our way across the city to Sealdah, the starting point for the Bengal-Assam railway. This proved a more arduous transit than it takes to tell, for my mother, imagining Pat to be bereft of civilised supplies, had turned up with some thirty items of baggage containing all she thought a Spartan bachelor-forester might need for a family Christmas. It was like going on safari, and left us two brothers nerve-wracked by the hell that ensued when the three taxi-drivers and the several coolies involved accused her - with entire justification and equal lack of success - of grossly underpaying them. Matters were not improved when, just as the train was pulling out, I surreptitiously slipped the head-coolie my last remaining rupee in the hope of stopping the clamour. He bit on it and then threw it back at me, for his experienced tooth had told him it was counterfeit! Even if I had spoken Bengali it would have been too late to assure him that I did not know this, for the train had gathered speed and we were off.

The journey to Dimapur was uneventful, except for a sharp passage with a Travelling Ticket Inspector halfway through. This gentleman, seeing in our huge quantity of unbooked luggage a

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chance of extracting a bribe, wanted us to off-load all of it at the next station and have it weighed! (In what was becoming a habit, we had arrived too late at Sealdah to have it booked into the luggage-van and, piled high in the second class compartment that we two brothers were sharing with some others, it tended to catch the eye.) My mother and Ruth Beatty, Pat's fiancée who was accompanying us, were in a separate lady's compartment, and this left Cyril, now two years through his army training, to handle the situation. He told the TTI in terse and military language to bee off - and return, if he chose, at our destination, where we would comply. As this was still several hours away and almost certainly well beyond his official beat, we saw no more of him. (Six months later, when on my way back south, I proved more of a simpleton. Sitting in my compartment in the Madras Mail waiting for it to leave Howrah, I was approached by a similar functionary who, on examining my ticket, told me it was not valid for travel by Mail. I swallowed his version and, without thinking to check it, meekly changed to a Passenger train that left some hours later and took a whole day longer to reach Madras. There, on belatedly inquiring, I was assured that my ticket had been good for *any* train! However, the tedium of the trip was relieved by a fellow-traveler who shared our almost empty compartment and produced some gramophone music that was much to my taste.)

Our camp consisted of a large basha or grass hut constructed entirely of bamboo and thatch. It had been carefully designed by Pat, complete with dining-room, open verandah and "bed and bath" on either side. The privies were some distance away behind a convenient clump of bushes. Assam winters are cold, but we were snug within our thick grass walls which we supplemented with plenty of blankets. Besides, we always had a fire going in front of the basha from early every evening, for there was no shortage of dry wood from the surrounding jungle, delivered daily by an elephant which always salaamed punctiliously with its trunk after depositing its load. We often provided our own breakfast of grilled green-pigeon, shot on the wing while being driven between stands of trees by our Naga peons. I was not very good with a shot-gun, but Cyril was not too bad, and Pat was vastly better, so that we never wanted for a tasty

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breakfast. Jungle fowl, occasional venison and domestic goat provided the rest of our meat. Flour, rice, vegetables and condiments were to be had from the Dimapur bazaar, and our special “goodies” were bought from a shop in more distant Golaghat which specialised in imported stuff, including butter-scotch almonds, chocolate eclairs, and a variety of tinned foods that were not to be had at our railway refreshment-room. The latter, run by the north Indian counterpart of Spencers, Madras, was our usual destination for the evening walk we took to enquire about my missing trunk.

The main elephant camp was about a mile downstream of our domestic bashas. Here, amidst the huts of the many mahouts, ropers, trainers and foragers, the captured wild elephants were tethered by ropes and leg-chains. The tame ones, after their day’s work and grooming, would usually be let loose in the jungle to forage for themselves, their legs lightly shackled so that they would not wander too far, and bells round their necks to make it easy to locate them the next morning. Activity within the camp was continuous, and by accompanying Pat on some of his marches, Cyril and I were able to see most of what an Assam keddah operation entailed.

Unlike keddahs in Mysore, there was not the single, huge stockade towards which small herds from different areas of the jungle would be driven over many days, to be trapped and roped in the one place. Instead, dotted throughout a large area marked out for trapping, there were several small keddahs, circular enclosures made of wooden logs with funnel-walls leading to an entrance at one point. Here, tied to a bent sapling, was a heavy gate that could be sprung shut as soon as a small group of elephants, stalked and discreetly herded over days, had been driven in. A single drive would not normally net more than a dozen elephants, more often less, and for all the apparent confusion and melee that would follow, there were remarkably few serious injuries and even fewer deaths. When all the herd was in, there would be a wary and frightened silence until the koonkies (tame elephants specially trained for the job) entered with their mahouts and ropers to begin the snaring. Sometimes a baby, squealing loudly inside the stockade, might find itself separated from

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its mother who would be demonstrating dangerously outside. It was then usually easier to let the baby out to join her rather than try to drive her in, for all that she was worth many thousands of rupees if captured. Or an adult male, cut off from the herd inside and keen to rejoin it, might approach the wall, when lots of shouting, blank shots and pointed bamboos would be used to deter him. But if these finally failed and he became a real menace, he would unfortunately have to be shot. I was spared ever having to witness such a killing. To prevent the captured herd from rushing the wall, a shallow trench was dug along the inside so as to break any such charge, and if they did get close enough to try and shoulder it, men standing on an outside ledge would shout and use their pointed bamboos to help the koonkies inside restore order.

When all the herd was in, the roping would start. This was more tiring than dangerous, and entailed throwing a heavy noose round the captive's neck - not an easy task, especially when, having got it round its head, the beast would cleverly slip its trunk under and throw it off again. Bigger or more obstreperous animals would have to be jammed between two tame ones till noosed. An essential and often intricate stage was the tying of the check-knot that prevented the noose from tightening and strangling the captive. In this, as in the earlier roping and the training to come, the koonkie was of much help, responding to the mahout's prodding toes behind its ears, and sometimes seeming even to act on its own, getting into the right position, warning the recalcitrant with its trunk, and even giving it a hefty blow on the jaw by a sort of upper-cut with the bridge of its nose. The noosing over, the captives would be led off, some quietly, others protesting at being pulled or even pushed, to the main camp where they would be immediately auctioned.

The training of elephants was an age-old art. Tethered by neck and fore-feet to one tree, and rear legs to another, the process of getting it used to humans would start. Men would bring it water and food; green stuff foraged from the jungle at first, but soon supplemented by delicacies like sugar-cane, jaggery and grain-meal of sorts. Its keeper would speak to it, touch it and shampoo it with

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oil while singing to it. It was a sad-sweet tune sung in a minor key, promising it a golden howdah and a princess to ride on its back, and would reach us with the smell of the smoke of the many fires lit at dusk, around which the men would huddle to keep warm and to cook their evening meal. After two or three days of this, it would be taken for its first walk, hemmed in between two koonkies with a trainer on its back, to gently break it in. In two weeks time it would be tame enough to walk about with just the trainer - now its mahout - on its back, its legs lightly shackled if it were still a little unruly, but learning to respond to commands: to stop, to back, to sit on all fours or lie on its side for its daily bath. Its graduation would be marked by its ability to pick up particular objects with its trunk to hand to its mahout and finally to raise it in a gesture of greeting. Thereafter, it might bring us our evening log of wood, balancing it on its upturned tusks and steadying it with its trunk.

We spent three happy months with Pat, changing the site of the main keddah camp just once when the fodder within convenient reach of the first ran out. It was again, of necessity, on the bank of a river, and we had hardly arrived to occupy it when a small brush-fire broke out rather too close by for comfort. The wind was blowing it towards our newly-built basha, but with the help of the staff we managed to put it out and return, only to find that in our absence, my mother, following sound fire-prevention procedure, had cut down a beautiful bough close to the front of the basha that Pat had intentionally left untouched as a frame for our view of the river! The loss was not serious, and did not prevent us from enjoying many an evening, sitting on its banks as the weather grew warmer and listening to the best of the popular tunes of the day, including, of course, the music of Irving Berlin, who died at the age of a over a hundred in 1989. They were all on 78s which Cyril had brought with his portable, hand-wound gramophone, and I can never hear them today without being transported back to that most enjoyable period of my life. Cyril and I learnt to drive Pat's old Ford tourer along jungle roads where there were no policemen to ask our age or demand our learner's license, though one had to watch out for hazards such as skids ending in turns of 180 degrees on roads made slippery by the

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rain. We went on picnics and trekked to more than one distant stockade to watch the roping of captured herds. One such march was especially memorable and I must tell about it.

Carrying our breakfast sandwiches and joined by three friends who failed to carry theirs, we three brothers set out at dawn for a small jungle village eighteen miles away where we intended halting for the night. We must have walked faster than intended, for the elephant carrying our baggage, which included our lunch, was soon left behind. It also took a different trail somewhere along the way, so that we finally lost it altogether until it turned up at our destination that night. After the lightest of breakfasts - sandwiches for three shared by six - we continued our march. Noon came and went, there was no sign of our elephant, and our stomachs began to remind us of the ample lunch in the hamper that it carried. We decided to rest and wait for it to catch up, but after a couple of hours waiting in vain, we continued our march. With evening upon us and the forest gloom adding to the falling darkness, we thought we discerned our missing elephant ahead. However, it was standing still and facing us - and there was neither pack nor person on its back! We backed off when we realised he was a wild loner, but he was apparently in good temper, for though he certainly saw us, he let us take a wide curve round him, with only his ears pushed forward to show his curiosity.

We reached the village well after nightfall, as hungry as lions, but with as yet no baggage in sight. All that the Village Headman could offer us, if we waited, was some plain boiled rice and a little rice-beer. But our senses sharpened by hunger, we spied a scrawny duck lurking under the raised floor of a village hut. The Headman said he was keeping it for an offering on an auspicious occasion due to arise shortly, but five rupees down compensated for any loss of spiritual merit he might have suffered by diverting the sacrificial duck our way, and it was not long before we were licking our fingers free of boiled duck and rice. When the elephant carrying our own food arrived, we tucked into that too, and our hunger thus sated, we slept the night well. As a postscript I must mention that I did the march in a pair of tight shoes that belonged to Cyril, as my trunk had

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still not turned up, and my only pair, in which I had traveled from Madras, was by now beyond wearing. It was not long before my discomfort became acute, but I determined to keep going. At the end of that long and memorable march, I knew from having endured the continual pain in my feet that I had advanced to manhood. Incidentally, my trunk did finally turn up at the small station with the odd name of Oating which served our second camp. I was happy to have my own clothes to wear for a change, and proud to show my mother and Pat all the trophies I had won in my last two years in school. Ruth and Cyril had departed by then, Ruth to resume teaching until she married Pat a year later, and Cyril to complete his last term at the IMA before receiving his commission.

Of the local people I remember Keshab, the office-boy who cycled to and from our local post office with our mail, including the telegram that brought me much joy with my High School results; Naga, our gun-boy (he actually *was* a Naga) who would take off on his own with one of our guns and return with a brace of duck for us (how many more for his friends in the camp we never did inquire); Chhattri, our Nepalese waterman, whose smile never left him even when he walked tirelessly between the river and our bashas, his pair of heavy buckets slung from a yoke on his shoulders; and not least of all, “Doctor Babu”, the camp vet who attended to any elephant that fell sick. I vividly recall his joy on receiving the news that his wife had given birth to his fifth son, for now, he said, he could look forward to the dowry this son would in due course bring, and which he would set aside in turn for the dowry of his fifth and last daughter! By contrast, there was Pat’s Assamese friend Barua, a gentleman-planter who lent me the writings of Gandhi and Nehru, for which I am still grateful. (He also once drove us in his Ford sedan to Jorhat, all of forty miles, to see Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in “Flying Down To Rio”. We were late for the picture, but the theatre owner, who was also a forest contractor and who knew we were coming, held up the start until we arrived. On our way home, I remember straining to see our way through the thickest fog I have ever experienced, while struggling to keep awake to alert Barua to any hazard ahead.)

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My mother and I said goodbye to Pat and Assam at the end of March of 1937, for it was time to move on to visit Ralph, who was then Sub-Collector, Narayangunj, in neighbouring Bengal. We traveled by train and ferry and finally by paddle-steamer up an estuary so wide that we could not see the river banks on either. We passed several large fishing-boats, their sails catching the pink light of early morning, a beautiful introduction to what is now Bangladesh. Ralph, whose wife and daughter were in England at the time, greeted us at the wharf and took us to his bungalow by the riverside. From there we had a view of what made Narayangunj important: hulking barges paired to tugs, bringing down raw jute to be processed in the factories located on the opposite bank. It was a large and busy river port that gave me my first experience of the hooting, smoke and bustle that marked several others like it in the jute-rich lands of Lower Bengal.

But it was not entirely noise and grime. The jute-wallahs, mostly Scotsmen, had their own quarter where they lived in handsome bungalows set in spacious, green and well-tended gardens, and a club that lacked nothing that made for pleasant relaxation. Ralph would sometimes take tea and sandwiches there after a day in court, while I made use of its library. On their large salaries they lived like petty princes, besides whom the Sub-Collector - king of his jurisdiction - seemed a nobody. (When I once remarked to Ralph that one of them seemed to come to tennis often wearing a much-darned shirt, he replied, "They don't have to dress for anyone" - a hint of the relations between the box-wallah and the Twice Born, as the British members of the ICS were not unhappy to be termed.)

A few miles north lay Dacca (now Dakha, the capital of Bangla Desh), the most important town in East Bengal and headquarters of Ralph's superior, the Commissioner. We visited it one afternoon, and my chief impression was of the beautiful public buildings that embodied the best of Indo-Islamic architecture, a reminder that the Mughuls had extended their imperial sway as far east as the borders of Assam. The Commissioner was a Hindu, a polished product of the

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badhralok, the educated and cultured Bengali upper-class, a graduate of Oxford and as English as English could be. Another member of the ICS whom I met when he visited Ralph was a young Muslim. He had been the originator of a scheme that saved the government a lot of money each year, and it was Ralph's opinion that had he been a European, he would have been given an OBE. It was he, incidentally, who casually drew my attention to the fine wire-mesh over Ralph's windows, intended as protection against the bombs that terrorists were apt to lob into magistrates' residences.

Much of an officer's touring in that part of Bengal involved trips by boat. Ralph had an official government launch, complete with a two-berth cabin and small galley, for his own use, and I had the pleasure of accompanying him on two of his tours in it. Like many a magistrate still in those days, he had occasionally when in camp to hold court under nothing more than the shade of a tree. At one of his sittings I heard him try a "bad livelihood" case. In such a case, the station-house officer produces a person before a magistrate along with witnesses and dossier to show that he habitually indulged in such rowdy, threatening or criminal activity as to justify his being bound over to be of good behaviour. In the case I sat in on, although everyone knew the man was a bad character, no one spoke against him. It turned out, to the Sub-Inspector's bad luck, that he and the local zemindar had been eyeing the same girl, and the latter had threatened to throw the witnesses off his land if they gave any evidence in support of the SI's case! It was my first experience, but by no means the last, of the hazards of a policeman's life.

Trying cases was not the only work of a magistrate. Ralph had to inspect subordinate courts and sub-jails in the headquarters of his taluks, visit political detainees who had been restricted to their homes, report on the working of craft centers where unemployed youth were taught a trade, inspect village schools, and generally see that all was well within his jurisdiction. An important responsibility was the general supervision of police and health arrangements wherever very large crowds gathered for any length of time. We once had to attend a large religious festival at a distant village.

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Setting out well before dawn, this time on foot, we got there well after sunrise, only to find Adams, the young English Assistant Superintendent of Police, emerging from his tent still in his pyjamas (dark blue with silver embroidery), sleepy-eyed and obviously not yet awake to his job. I heard later of his happy death. He passed out at a Government House party and never regained consciousness!

Mid-May, and it was time for me to leave my mother with Ralph and move on to stay with Doreen at Gorakhpur in the United Provinces where she was Superintendent of the government women's hospital there. With an Indian Bradshaw I worked out what seemed to be the shortest rail-route across Bengal and Bihar to get there, but it turned out to be a long and tedious journey involving river-crossings by ferry and many changes of trains. At one rail junction, Katihar, I had to spend half a night in my compartment while a heavy storm, accompanied by thunder and lightning such as I had never experienced before, raged outside. It was a terrifying event, and I was relieved when the train set off and left it behind me.

Doreen met me at the station, and as she had no car, we drove by tonga to her home in what was generally called the civil lines in British Indian headquarter-towns. It was a typically mofussil house, with broad verandahs and green chiks to keep out the heat, which was then at its most severe. But it had no punkahs to remind me of my earlier days in my father's districts, for progress in the form of electric fans had taken over. Her neighbour was the Divisional Commissioner, a Scotsman named Grant, whose bungalow was separated from hers by a vast compound in which he used to practice his polo shots. He was a senior member of the ICS, but a man of simple habits which included working at his desk in bare feet during the summer. When Doreen took me along to make my first call on him, he was sitting in his lounge-room, wearing slippers and writing a letter to his son at Cambridge, and was homely enough, when Doreen mentioned my own hopes for Oxford, to tell us that it took nearly a thousand rupees a month to keep him there. I can still recall his smile when I remarked on the habit of an Anglo-Indian nursing sister at the hospital who regularly referred to England as "home".

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As Chairman of the Hospital Board, he was once of help to Doreen in getting rid of a difficult subordinate, a political appointee (for provincial self-government had arrived that year). With a look in Doreen's direction, he wondered out loud whether the post was really necessary, and Doreen agreeing, he just abolished it.

He must have been considered a highly capable officer, for shortly after I met him, he was selected for the post of Chief Commissioner, Cyprus, still at that time a British possession. A similar prestigious posting not long before had been that of Sir Charles Teggart, an IP officer of great competence, best remembered as the Commissioner of Police who once exchanged revolver fire with a terrorist on a Calcutta street. He went from Bengal to become head of the Palestine police, and left his name behind in the Teggart forts that he devised to help maintain law and order there, and that still exist. Another ICS officer on external loan was Muir, who had been India's Deputy High Commissioner in South Africa before he returned to become Collector of Coimbatore district when I was under training there. Such important postings, well beyond the area of Indian administration, were a measure of the confidence that Britain reposed in the versatility and competence of her Indian imperial servants.

Gorakhpur had been a major staging post for the British during their campaigns against Nepal in the Gurkha Wars of the previous century. It was still an important administrative centre and thus the headquarters of many senior officials - mostly British - at the time. I met a few of them at a party Doreen once gave by way of return hospitality, and always envied them when I saw them at their evening chukka of polo, even though I knew that with my impaired wrist I would never be able to manage the game. Mixing in such company, hearing them talk of their work and experiences, and seeing the sort of life they lived only confirmed me in my decision to enter one of the imperial services.

When, two years later and about to pass my Intermediate, I got a letter from Cyril saying he did not think the family would be able to

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pay for my further education and that I should make up my mind to go into the Indian Medical Department, I remember replying that I had no intention of starting life as an upper subordinate. That after the war I could have been released to enter private practice and end up, like so many of my IMD contemporaries, much more comfortably off than I actually did is another matter. I only know that during my career in the Indian Police I got more satisfaction than any money could have bought, and which never could have replaced the affection and respect of all those subordinates, colleagues, superiors and members of the public with whom I came in contact. This I derived simply by following the rule prescribed for the *karma yogi* of doing one's duty with no care for the fruits or consequences of one's actions, and by using my authority to protect the innocent, pursue the guilty, and deliver justice as best I could, while trying to set a good example to the very many it fell to me to command.

Doreen had friends at her previous headquarters, Barabanki, a railway centre further up the line and some twenty miles from Lucknow, whom she wanted me to meet, so I went to stay with them for a week. Crosby was a junior civil engineer on the railways, up from Permanent Way Inspector and not too far from retirement. He was a large, florid man with a wife who was older than he and much more mature. They must have married late, for their family consisted of two pretty teenage daughters, of whom Theo, the younger, was much the more attractive. I was sixteen and vulnerable - and apparently a fast worker, for within days I was confessing my love for her, which she returned. We kissed a little, and held hands at a movie which we went into Lucknow to see. (Besides the picture, there were other sights to visit, notably the city's impressive Mughul buildings and, of course, the ruins of the Residency whose defence during the Indian mutiny under Henry Lawrence, who was killed during the siege, has passed into legend.) But our love was not destined to last, for I had soon to return south to start college, while she remained in far off Barabanki. My first love-letter to her was answered in a very understanding way by her mother, who said she felt we were a little young to think we had fallen seriously in love, and that time and distance would soon help us to get over it. She

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ended with a gentle suggestion that I cease writing to Theo. The words of a song that was popular then, "A Fine Romance with No Kisses", and which even today takes me back to Barabanki, were going through my head; Mrs. Crosby's letter did seem to make sense; and I, inconstant male, had meanwhile met a girl who had interested me from about the age of ten, albeit at a distance. So I complied.

Joyce was a Hart, a Madras tribe as numerous as the Straceys. Her father, like mine, was a district forest officer, but much younger, and their paths had never crossed. She had two brothers, the elder of whom had been friendly with us even before we broke up home. Like so many others in their position, their parents had decided on Bangalore for their schooling. Their mother had died at Bellary at the early age of forty two a few months before we met, and the children were staying with an aunt. Like us, they thought an education was not complete without a degree, and knowing this, I had written from Gorakhpur to a friend asking if a Joyce Hart had enrolled at college (it could only have been St Joseph's). I was not surprised to hear in reply that she had - and would be in the same class as I! What did surprise me was our early meeting. One of my school-mates had made friends with the Parr family while I was away. Mr. Parr was related to my mother but, more to the point, he had five pretty daughters, the youngest of whom, Audrey, was Joyce's best friend and classmate. (Another was Joan Ottman, an extremely attractive girl who was crowned Bangalore's Beauty Queen more than once.) My friends took me along to the Parrs on the first evening of my return, and it was with pleasure and a thrill that I met Joyce for the first time. I fell in love with her at once, and she, proving no less tardy, responded, sitting behind me in French class and digging me, not impatiently, with a pencil.

Our meeting was by far the happiest event in this period of my growing up, and though we waited eight years before marrying - five to complete our studies and, for me, three to get into and settle down in service - we were rarely far from each other during this time. And coming entirely innocent to each other when we did marry made the wait all the more worthwhile.

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